



CommunityUpdate

friendsandresidents.org

Community Update is provided as a courtesy to DC community leaders and public housing administrators by Friends & Residents of Arthur Capper and Carrollsburg.

May 8 2003

The following is from the text of a recent press release about the May 7 DCHA meeting:

DC Housing Authority Locks-Out Public Housing Residents from Community Meeting

- Threatens to arrest residents who expressed dissent at the community meeting
- Removes all residents under age 18

Youth and other public housing residents planned to stage a protest at a May 7, 2003 community meeting of the DC Housing Authority. The community meeting was held at Van Ness Elementary School, adjoining the Arthur Capper and Carrollsburg public housing community. The housing authority billed the meeting as an opportunity to get community input on the HOPE VI project at the public housing community. HOPE VI is the federal program financing the demolition and rebuilding of Arthur Capper.

The protest, organized by youth and adult leaders of Friends and Residents, was aimed to express resident demands for clear written guarantees that all residents will have the right to return to the neighborhood after the housing authority demolishes and rebuilds their homes. Residents wanted to express doubts that they will be allowed to move back, citing the carefully worded and highly qualified claims made by the housing authority. Residents don't want slippery wording that hedges the DCHA's commitment to the right-to-return.

But when housing authority officials, including the housing authority's executive director Michael Kelly, saw protest signs at the meeting, the officials first removed some community advocates of public housing and then threatened to arrest any remaining resident who expressed dissent at the meeting.

"They kept us out of the meeting tonight, saying to us that we aren't residents. But I am," said resident Linda Cuffey, who remained in the lobby because she was too tired after a day of work to push the matter. "Besides, what right do they have to stop anyone from speaking up about what's happening in our city? This issue is about more than just Arthur Capper. It's something we should all care about" said Cuffey.

Later, housing authority officials removed all residents under age 18 who were at the meeting. The youth, who helped plan and organize the protest, left the meeting peacefully and waited outside to let the DCHA know how they felt. Once youth leader commented, "Michael Kelly wouldn't listen to us. But even though it was raining, when we were kicked out we stayed outside in the rain so we could talk to him." All the youth were residents of the community.

Who we are

Friends and Residents is a resident-led organization made up of residents of all ages, from grandchildren to grandmothers, formed to provide meaningful resident input in the HOPE VI process at Arthur Capper and Carrollsburg. Friends and Residents is the voices of residents concerned about being permanently kicked out of their community.



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